The Report Committee for Henry T. Quillen
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Moneymaking and Economics in Aristotle's *Politics*

APPROVED BY
SUPERVISING COMMITTEE:

Devin A. Stauffer, Supervisor

Thomas L. Pangle

Moneymaking and Economics in Aristotle's *Politics*

by

Henry T. Quillen

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Dedication

To my wife and friends.

“ὥσπερ ἄλλος τις ἢ ἵππῳ ἀγαθῷ ἢ κυνὶ ἢ ὄρνιθι ἥδεται, οὕτω καὶ ἔτι μᾶλλον ἥδομαι φίλοις ἀγαθοῖς, καὶ ἐάν τι ἔχω ἀγαθόν, διδάσκω, καὶ ἄλλοις συνίστημι παρ᾽ ὧν ἂν ἡγῶμαι ὠφελήσεσθαί τι αὐτοὺς εἰς ἀρετήν. καὶ τοὺς θησαυροὺς τῶν πάλαι σοφῶν ἀνδρῶν, οὓς ἐκεῖνοι κατέλιπον ἐν βιβλίοις γράψαντες, ἀνελίττων κοινῇ σὺν τοῖς φίλοις διέρχομαι, καὶ ἄν τι ὁρῶμεν ἀγαθὸν ἐκλεγόμεθα, καὶ μέγα νομίζομεν κέρδος, ἐὰν ἀλλήλοις φίλοι γιγνώμεθα” (Xen. *Mem*. 1.6.14).

Abstract

Moneymaking and Economics in Aristotle's *Politics*

Henry T. Quillen, M.A.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2020

Supervisor: Devin A. Stauffer

Aristotle's *Politics* I.8-11 contains a profound reflection on the relationship between moneymaking and the divergent needs of individuals and politics. It offers not only a clear confrontation with the issue of scarcity, but, unlike modern economics, also a causal explanation of limitless demand. Moreover, Aristotle suggests that the psychological consequences of scarcity pull human beings away from the satisfaction of a fuller range of their needs, and that clarity about those needs greatly weakens the human passion for limitless moneymaking. Need and utility, not unlimited acquisitiveness, are the focus of Aristotelian economics. Yet he also shows that clarity about human needs is quite rare, and, in political life, necessarily absent. I argue that Aristotle's teaching in *Politics* I.8-11 is that the philosopher, an essentially private individual, is the true economist on account of his unique clarity about human neediness.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Aristotle's *Politics* I.8-11[1] contains a profound reflection on the relationship between money and the divergent needs of individuals and politics. It offers not only a clear confrontation with the issue of scarcity, but unlike modern economics, also a causal explanation of limitless demand. Aristotle's arguments are not abstract, head-in-the-clouds speculation, as hard-nosed pragmatists might expect of philosophers, but eminently useful sources of wisdom about perennial economic questions.[2] Moreover, while mainstream economists more or less admit the incapacity of their discipline to address questions of moral importance, Aristotle's thought offers masterful direction to the individual or statesman in need of knowledge about what he *ought* to do.[3]

Aristotle's account of moneymaking and economics in *Politics* I.8-11 is indispensable reading for anyone serious about understanding his own or his community's economic situation, but modern economists hardly treat it with due seriousness. This is not due to obsolescence, for according to Todd Lowry, "The few economists who have been familiar with the classics, such as Adam Smith, Karl Marx, Nassau Senior, Henry Sidgwick, John K. Ingram, and Philip Wicksteed, have appreciated the significance and relevance of an ancient Greek thought in economics."[4] Rather, Aristotle is regarded as a mere stepping stone on the path to true economic science—

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[1] References to the texts of Aristotle are by book and chapter number and/or Bekker number. Roman and Arabic numerals refer to book and chapter, respectively. All translations of the *Politics* are my own, based on the texts W.D. Ross, *Aristotelis Politica* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957) and W.L. Newman, *The Politics of Aristotle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1887), Vol. I-IV.

[2] S. Todd Lowry, *The Archaeology of Economic Ideas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987), 240. "In the long history of Aristotle's writings in the West, his economic analysis was for most of that time studied as relevant to current economic problems."

[3] Joseph A. Schumpeter, *History of Economic Analysis* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), 54.

[4] Lowry, *The Archaeology of Economic Ideas,* 7. For an account of Aristotle's influence in past and present modes of economic thought, see Scott Meikle, *Aristotle's Economic Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 1. For the Aristotelian roots of modern economic concepts, see Lowry, *The Archaeology of Economic Ideas,* 239-40 and Schumpeter, *History of Economic Analysis,* 59-61.

interesting for historical reasons, but not as a genuine challenge. Joseph Schumpeter's weak defense of the study of economic history, for example, says little more than that "we stand to profit from visits to the lumber room [a room for storing old furniture] provided we do not stay there too long."[5] Then, before he lays out an inaccurate and superficial summary of Aristotle's economics, he dismisses it as "embryonic."[6] Nonetheless, Schumpeter at least deserves credit for reading Aristotle. On the whole, "young economists are being trained as technicians with little understanding of the history or broader methodological and philosophical aspects of their field, and the history of economic thought has come to be regarded in some quarters as a highly dispensable academic pursuit."[7] Modern economists do not generally ignore Aristotle because they have read and disagree with his arguments, but because of intellectual laziness.[8]

If economists remain uninterested in the philosophic dimensions of their discipline, they will never come to understand the full complexity of Aristotelian economics and therefore never face one of the most thoughtfully articulated challenges to the content, orientation, and even self-understanding of modern economics. According to Lowry, "[Modern] definitions of economics vary from the conception of it as the study of self-regulating, price-forming market processes, to the study of unlimited human wants impinging upon scarce physical resources…, to the value-free, abstract study of the maximization of efficiency in *any* given set of relationships."[9] For Aristotle, the proper study of economics is not the limitless, but the proper limit, whereas focus on

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5 Schumpeter, *History of Economic Analysis*, 3.

6 Schumpeter, *History of Economic Analysis*, 57.

7 Lowry, *The Archaeology of Economic Ideas*, 8.

8 Lowry, *The Archaeology of Economic Ideas*, 8. Lowry quotes economist Daniel Bell, who said: "When the world is messy…you fall back either on ideology or technique. Good young people respond to the seductions of technique. It's independent of experience, and you don't have to know much."

9 Lowry, *The Archaeology of Economic Ideas*, 8.

limitlessness reflects a failure to understand economics. An economic science that only describes market processes, efficiency, and the satisfaction of limitless desires is very incomplete, Aristotle would say, because it lacks an account of need and utility necessary for providing structure to the other dimensions of economics. Yet economists are more likely to dismiss Aristotle as someone uninterested in real economics than to consider the possibility that economics suffers from a fundamental deficiency.[10] Meanwhile, modern economics continues to elide "the distinction between use value and exchange value," thereby losing clarity about "perhaps the most important question that can be asked in respect of economic matters."[11] Aristotle understands the fundamental questions of economics even better than modern economists, but his wisdom is in danger of being forgotten because we assume he must be wrong.

Another obstacle to appreciating the full richness of Aristotle's economics is superficial reading. One simply cannot understand Aristotle without serious attention to his rhetorical strategy. According to al-Farabi, the great medieval Aristotelian, "the modes of abstruseness, obscurity, and complexity in Aristotle's procedure, despite his apparent intention to explain and elucidate, will not be concealed from anyone who *carefully* investigates his scientific teachings, studies his books, and *perseveres* with them."[12] Aristotle presents a superficial intention to be a clear expositor, but those who read with care will notice deliberately placed puzzles meant to complicate the surface-level teaching. Reading Aristotle requires carefulness, perseverance, and inquisitiveness. Indeed, this older, truer understanding of the demands of reading philosophic texts generally and Aristotle in particular has been well documented, but modern scholars are still

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10 Lowry, *The Archaeology of Economic Ideas,* 7.

11 Meikle, *Aristotle's Economic Thought*, 191-93.

12 Al-Farabi, "The Harmonization of the Two Opinions of the Two Sages: Plato the Divine and Aristotle," in *Alfarabi, The Political Writings: 'Selected Aphorisms' and Other Texts*, trans. Charles E. Butterworth (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 131 [emphasis mine].

largely unattuned to Aristotle's rhetorical strategy.[13] The result, of course, is a failure to understand the philosophy of Aristotle. This tendency towards superficiality is so pervasive that only a handful modern scholarly works covering Aristotle's *Politics* I.8-11 demonstrate an appreciation of Aristotle's rhetorical complexity.[14]

Careful attention to Aristotle's rhetorical strategy in *Politics* I.8-11 reveals that Aristotle may understand the requirements of a true science of economics even better than we moderns. We shall find, in the first place, that Aristotle is neither bound by an "influence of prejudices which he shared with his age and nation," nor is he "inclined to cut all societies after the same pattern."[15] We shall also find that Aristotle does not find true economic knowledge in the capacity to create self-regulating systems for the satisfaction of our infinitely expanding desires; rather, he finds it in clarity about genuine need and utility, lack of which is the root of infinite desire. Yet he recognizes also that political life is dependent on this very lack of clarity, and would endorse only very careful, marginal political change in the direction of genuine economic clarity. Most importantly, Aristotle saw that economic science is ultimately not an instrument for political progress at all, but rather the philosophic clarity of a few privately oriented individuals.

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13 Arthur M Melzer, "Aristotle, The 'Cuttlefish'," in *Philosophy Between the Lines* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2014), 30-46. See also Arthur M. Melzer, "A Chronological Compilation of Testimonial Evidence for Esotericism," University of Chicago Press, accessed May 1, 2020, https://press.uchicago.edu/sites/melzer/index.html. For Aristotle's rhetorical strategy in his political works, see Thomas L. Pangle, "The Rhetorical Strategy Governing Aristotle's Political Teaching," *Journal of Politics* 73, no. 1 (Jan. 2011).

14 Chronologically, these are: Mary Pollingue Nichols, "The Good Life, Slavery, and Acquisition: Aristotle's Introduction to Politics," *Interpretation* 11, no. 2 (May 1983); Wayne H. Ambler, "Aristotle on Acquisition," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 17, no. 3 (Sept. 1984); Wayne H. Ambler, "Aristotle's Understanding of the Naturalness of the City," *Review of Politics* 47, no. 2 (Apr. 1985); Mary P. Nichols, *Citizens and Statesmen: A Study of Aristotle's Politics* (Savage: Rowman & Littlefield, 1992); Pangle, "The Rhetorical Strategy Governing Aristotle's Political Teaching;" and Thomas L. Pangle, *Aristotle's Teaching in the Politics* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2013).

15 Newman, *The Politics of Aristotle*, Vol. I, 138.

What follows is an exegesis of Aristotle's *Politics* I.8-11 with special focus on how Aristotle's economic science emerges from and relates to his rhetorical project. I will attempt to show the full range of questions that Aristotle believed must be answered in order to qualify as a true economist, and also why he believed lack of clarity about them is necessary for political life. My primary intent, however, is to show the gulf between the genuine economic clarity offered by philosophy and the comparative economic shallowness of political practice.

II. THE QUESTION OF MONEYMAKING[16]

The primary puzzle of Book I of Aristotle's *Politics* is the relationship between expertise in political rule,[17] kingly rule, economics,[18] and mastery of slaves. Its treatment begins in I.1 with a statement of the Socratic argument that the expert in one of these has expertise in them all.[19] On the basis of the argument's ignobility, Aristotle rejects it.[20] By the supposition of the Socratics, Aristotle says, "a big household and a small city do not differ; and…on the one hand, whenever one has authority himself, he is a king, while, on the other hand, whenever one rules and is ruled in turn according to the reasonings of this sort of science [the kingly], he is a statesman" (1252a12-16). According to the view Aristotle challenges, the ability to take care of oneself and one's household is a science, which, when expanded in scope, becomes the other arts of rule. By extension, the core of statesmanship is then the no more dignified than the tasks of economics. Aristotle, on the contrary, at least presents himself as agreeing with the conventional opinion that

16 Aristotle's term is the Greek word *χρηματιστική*, the many meanings of which center around active acquisition. Generally, "moneymaking," understood as having a slightly negative connotation, is the best translation of the term in the context of *Politics* 8-11, though often "acquisition" is more appropriate. I use both "moneymaking" and "acquisition" according to context, but with preference for the former. For helpful discussions of the word's meaning, see Carnes Lord, *Aristotle's Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 18n33 and Newman, *The Politics of Aristotle*, Vol. II, 165.

17 The Greek term *πολιτική* is translated as "expert political rule" or "statesmanship." The term *πολιτικός*, is translated similarly as "expert politician" or "statesman."

18 The primary meaning of *οἰκονομική* is "household management," but I have preferred "economics" in order to facilitate thought about the distance between modern economics and the economics of Aristotle. *οἰκονομικός*, a related term that occurs in I.1, is translated as "skilled economist." On the derivation of the name of the modern discipline from the term's usage by the Socratic philosopher Xenophon, see Lowry, *The Archaeology of Economic Ideas, 247*. Economics as "household management," that is, as having an essential administrative component, was the primary usage of the term for most of its history. On how the shift to the modern usage is rooted in a break between ancient and modern economic thought, see Lowry, *The Archaeology of Economic Ideas*, 240.

19 Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, III.4.12: "Do not look down, [Socrates] said, upon men who are expert economists. For caring to private affairs differs from caring to public ones only in magnitude." Translation mine.

20 He says that they do not argue nobly/beautifully, which does not mean that they argue incorrectly.

statesmanship is more dignified. Rather than giving an argument in conventional opinion's defense, however, he claims that the rest of Book I will make this clear.[21]

The Socratic argument about the relationship between the arts of ruling entails that if a man cannot rule himself or his household, he also does not possess a true understanding of politics. Therefore, the question of the relationship, soon to be broached, between moneymaking and economics is by no means minor. If one must have expertise in both economics and politics in order to have it in either of them, then failure to possess expertise in moneymaking might discredit the claim of ordinary political men to have skill in not just economics, but also politics. The legitimacy and dignity of ordinary political men is at stake in Aristotle's apparently trivial inquiry into moneymaking.

Aristotle begins the inquiry by setting out some possibilities. He says, " First, one might raise the question whether moneymaking is (1) the same as economics, or (2) some part, or (3) subordinate to it, and if subordinate, whether it is subordinate as (3a) shuttle making is to weaving or as (3b) bronzeworking is to sculpting" (1256a3-7). Aristotle's first possibility entails that being good at making money is both necessary and sufficient for running a home well, while the second and third possibilities entail that making money is necessary for running a home well but not sufficient. The sub-possibilities of (3) differ by the way in which making money is necessary for running a home well. The difference between the two is whether the art provides the instruments or the matter of the relevant art. If the art of getting goods provides instruments, then moneymaking only provides the stuff necessary for the core activity of economics. If moneymaking provides the

[21] Ambler, "Aristotle's Understanding of the Naturalness of the City," 166. "Aristotle thus suggests that the second chapter's account of the city's growth is the most noble way of seeing the city, whereas he said above that an analysis of its parts would make the issue clear…It is left to the reader to determine the extent to which the longer analysis in chapters 3 through 13 supports the noble findings presented in chapter 2."

matter, then the core activity of economics is completed through making money and consequently any other necessary component of economics would be auxiliary.

Aristotle quickly dismisses his first possibility by assuming the matter in dispute. "It is clear," he claims, "that economics is not the same as moneymaking, for it belongs to the one [moneymaking] to furnish and to the other [economics] to use. For what is the skill that uses household things if not economics?" (1256a11-13).[22] The initial question was whether moneymaking is (1) the same as, (2) an essential aspect of, (3a) an instrument of, or (3b) the essential core of economics. Now, however, he urges us to assume, first, that the same art cannot both supply and use, and second, that the essential core of economics cannot be to supply—ruling out options (1), (2), and (3b). But one other obvious possibility, at least for a good Athenian citizen, is that moneymaking is the chief component of economics, and that it derives its dignity from providing for other arts. Thomas Pangle helpfully argues that a civically-minded gentleman would likely understand the point of economics to be profit-generation that provides leisure and other equipment for employment in civic life.[23] Why not say that moneymaking is economics, which is in turn an instrument of the more dignified art of statesmanship?

Aristotle's peculiar first step to the question of the relationship between moneymaking and economics ignores the civically-minded understanding of households as incomplete, subsidiary associations of the political community. Turning us away from the more civic possibility, he forces us to consider instead what the core of economics would be if it were not moneymaking. What is

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[22] With this casual statement, Aristotle implicitly rejects all modern definitions of economics, at least by Lowry's account. See Lowry, *The Archaeology of Economic Ideas,* 8.

[23] Pangle, *Aristotle's Teaching in the Politics*, 53. The possibility raised by Pangle is the most obvious possible relationship between moneymaking, economics, and statesmanship in light of the relationship between individuals, the household, and the political community presented in I.2. If I.2 gives an embellished basis for traditional opinion, I.8 avoids ever giving it a hearing.

this art of using property that Aristotle suggests is the core of economics? What would it mean to use property well? The civic perspective would understand good use to be equipping an individual for civic life and thereby providing the opportunity to advance the common good of the community. By ushering away this understanding of the relationship between economics and statesmanship, Aristotle has primed our thinking in the direction of outside of the political perspective.

This first step redirects our attention to the question "whether moneymaking is a part of economics or different in kind" (1256a13-14). Rather than considering the more expansive question of the relationship between moneymaking and economics, we now proceed on the assumption that if moneymaking has a share in economics *at all* (which is now an open question), it must be only an instrumental part.[24] With this in mind, he says, "if it belongs to the skilled moneymaker to see from where money and property come, and if property and wealth include many parts, one must then consider first if farming is some part of moneymaking or of some other type, and if this is the case regarding concern for sustenance generally and its possessions" (1256a15-19) Aristotle's explicit justification for the shift to farming is understandable enough: farming and the various means of acquiring sustenance indeed seem to be modes of moneymaking, so an account of the art would need to include them. Nevertheless, we must wonder how this will reveal anything about whether moneymaking is a part of economics or different in kind.

The puzzling shift to farming only becomes more baffling upon consideration of Aristotle's audience. An important part of Athenian politics and economics were gentlemen who farmed for

[24] Newman, *The Politics of Aristotle*, Vol. I, 127. "Aristotle, on the other hand, feels bound to ask whether the Science of Supply is a part of Household Science at all. He had, indeed, incidentally taken this for granted in an early chapter of the Politics (I.3.1253b12), but later on (I.8.1256a3 sq.), he seems inclined to recede from this hasty admission, for he suggests the question whether, after, all, the former is not merely auxiliary (*ὑπηρετική*) to the latter."

profit in order to afford the means and leisure for rigorous political participation.[25] To ask if farming is a mode of skilled moneymaking is then to question whether these gentlemen—a large portion of Aristotle's audience[26]—truly understand moneymaking, how to manage their homes, and the relationship between their private and public affairs. In effect, Aristotle forces his audience to consider the possibility that its own conception of good politics, being premised on an economics which has farming for profit as its core, might be fundamentally flawed.[27]

Aristotle does not explicitly dwell on the implications of his suggestion about farming and moneymaking, but the general character of his transition to discussing the other modes of sustenance further radicalizes them. First, he shifts the primary aspect of his concern for farming from its profit-making potential to its sustenance-supplying potential, and then to the modes of sustenance supplying generally. He has thereby raised the provision of only most necessary needs as a rival standard to the one implicit in the civic perspective. Taken with Aristotle's earlier hinting that the standard for good use might not be political, we must now at least begin to wonder about the skilled moneymaker's attitude toward civic life viz-à-viz his basic needs as an individual.

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25 Lowry, *The Archaeology of Economic Ideas,* 48.

26 Pangle, *Aristotle's Teaching in the Politics*, 5 and 18.

27 Pangle, *Aristotle's Teaching in the Politics*, 53. Schumpeter, *History of Economic Analysis*, 57, is then clearly incorrect. He claims, "Nothing would be easier to show that [Aristotle] was primarily concerned with the 'natural' and the 'just' as seen from the standpoint of his ideal of the good and virtuous life, and that the economic facts and relations between economic facts which he considered and evaluated appear in light of the ideological preconceptions to be expected in a man who lived in, and wrote for, a cultivated leisure class, which held work and business pursuits in contempt, and, of course, loved the farmer who fed it and hated the money lender who exploited it."

III. SUSTENANCE

Aristotle begins his account of the other modes of sustenance with a cryptic claim: "Indeed, there are many forms of sustenance, and *hence* many ways of life both for animals and for human beings" (1256a19-21).[28] There is a causal relationship between an animal's diet and its way of life, Aristotle suggests, including for human beings. Ignoring for a moment the claim about animal life, this at least is not obviously true for human beings. Aristotle next offers a partial explanation, saying, "For it is not possible to live without sustenance, *with the result* that the differences of sustenance make the ways of life of animals differ." This makes sense only if preservation itself is the sole concern of animals. While the other animals may have such a narrow range of concerns, human beings appear to care about far more. Aristotle even hints at his awareness of this difficulty in the passage; for while Aristotle argues that sustenance determines the ways of life of animals, but he never argues that sustenance completely determines the ways of life of human beings. Human beings appear to be unique among animals in that sustenance alone does not determine their ways of life.

Aristotle defends the general thrust of this argument by unfolding a teleological doctrine.[29] He begins,

> For some of the beasts are herd animals while others are scattered, whichever of the two is advantageous for their sustenance on account of the fact that some are carnivorous while others are herbivores and omnivores, with the result that nature has marked out their ways of life with a view to their ease and inclinations….likewise also for human beings. For their ways of life differ much (1256a23-30).

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[28] Emphasis in quotes from Aristotle is always my own.

[29] Ambler, "Aristotle on Acquisition," 493, speaking in the first person, argues that this doctrine has a quasi-religious character, "I noted first the striking suggestion that nature, *like a beneficent deity*, makes all things for man's sake, and it appeared that Aristotle was advocating a return to the acquisitive practices of primitive times" [emphasis mine].

This step suggests that nature has made life easy for all animals, but also raises an important difficulty for the position.[30] Is not the sustenance of the carnivore some other animal? Nature has equipped some animals to kill others, for whom it has in turn provided too inadequately for successful defense. Aristotle's teleological account is not actually one of peace and harmony, but hierarchy and predation. Aristotle seems to have intended both to give a misimpression that the artless life of an animal is smooth sailing and to hint subtly at the contrary.

Aristotle's account of nature, as we have seen, suggests that nature is beneficent. This impression only grows as the account proceeds until nature is even said to provide for grown animals as mothers provide for their young. But while the tone of the passage suggests this, the argument of the text never necessarily requires it. As we shall see, Aristotle offers frequent hints that a less exalted reading may make more sense. It will be important for understanding I.8 both to follow the exalted overtones as they unfold and to attempt to find the more sensible suggestions underlying them. In effect, we must follow two different readings at the same time: an exalted reading and a skeptical one.

Next, Aristotle elaborates the human applications of his teleological doctrine. He claims that there are five human ways of life, at least as pertains to "naturally arising work": the skilled nomad, the skilled pirate, the skilled fisher, the skilled hunter, and the skilled farmer" (1256a40-b2).[31] But this portrait of human life fails to parallel animal life in a number of important respects. First, the difference between the tiger and the gazelle's way of life came about as a result of their differing diets by nature. While a farmer may eat more vegetables than a fisherman, they are not by nature herbivores and carnivores respectively. Second, none of these ways of life are natural for man in

30 Ambler, "Aristotle on Acquisition," 491.

31 Each of these has the suffix "-*ικος*," which suggests expertise.

the same way that acquisition of sustenance is for animals. Even the idlest of nomads, whose sustenance comes "without labor and amid leisure" still must use human art to satisfy his needs.[32] In fact, Aristotle underscores this when he argues that "Those who mix these ways of life live pleasantly, supplementing their deficient way of life, in whatever way it happens to be lacking in self-sufficiency…they live in whatever manner need together with pleasure compels" (1256b2-7).

The wily Aristotle, however, does not concede these points, but rather doubles down on his teleological doctrine. He says, "Now such property appears to be given by nature herself to all animals. Just as it is given straightaway from their birth, so too when they have matured" (1256b7-10). Evidence for this, he says, is the milk some animals give to their offspring. But what is the breastmilk for a grown man if not the plants and animals for whom nature allegedly provides? If man's sustenance really were as available as breastmilk, he would not need human art. In fact, we seem to use art precisely because our most basic needs are not so easily met. Perhaps Aristotle's teleological doctrine is intended to teach, through its curious absurdities, that our vulnerability and our capacity for art are connected.

Finally, Aristotle resolves some difficulties by explicitly arguing that some beings exist for the sake of others. "One must suppose," he argues, "both that plants came into being for the sake of animals and that the other animals are for the sake of human beings" (1256b15-17).[33] On the level of the exalted reading, this solution comes at the expense of still more difficulties. Chiefly, even if we suppose this were true, animals seem to go against nature's designs quite frequently. How would this argument account for the obvious reality that lions, vipers, sharks, and many other

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[32] Ambler, "Aristotle on Acquisition," 491. Amber makes this point by focusing on the curious inclusion of plunder as one of the natural ways of life. I agree that this is the most obvious example of human artfulness in the account, but I think it important to emphasize that not just one, but all five of the ways of life presented require some degree of artfulness.

[33] Ambler, "Aristotle on Acquisition," 491.

animals consume human beings? These dissensions within nature's ranks seem frequent enough to call into doubt Aristotle's argument altogether. Aristotle says we "must suppose it," but why must we suppose every living thing on Earth exists for the sake of man's well-being, especially given all the evidence to the contrary?

Aristotle argues that we need anthropocentricism in order to preserve the tenability of natural purposefulness. He says, "If, then, nature makes nothing that is incomplete or purposeless, nature must necessarily have made all of these for the sake of human beings." According to the more exalted reading of I.8, this suggestion makes some sense. If an animal was intended to be eaten by another animal, nature cannot have intended it to have accomplished some end through its own agency, but rather through that which ate it. Yet the objection remains that animals seem to defy the natural order quite often—especially those that consume human beings. If nature is purposeful, its purposefulness must be of a different character than the exalted reading of I.8 suggests.

The most fundamental argument of Aristotle's teleological doctrine rests on the premise that nature is not incomplete or purposeless. If by "nature," we mean a cosmic force that marshals forth the fruits of the Earth for man's ready consumption, then this premise would be problematic for the many reasons shown above. Yet suggestions about natural purposefulness occur throughout the Aristotelian corpus. Consideration of these is helpful for uncovering the serious thoughts behind the exalted reading of Aristotle's suggestions about purposefulness.

Consider the following from *Gait of Animals* 704b12-16:

> One of our principles is that the nature [of a particular sort of being] does nothing pointless, but always, given the possibilities, does what is best for the substantial being of each kind of animal.[34]

The difference between the teleology of *Politics* I.8 and that of Aristotle's biological writings is the inclusion of *natures* in the latter versus the apparently singular *nature* of the former. And while we have not seen evidence that some singular nature provides for human beings, we have been given suggestions that *human* nature does. When Aristotle presented nature's provisions for man as different ways of life, we noticed that these ways of life were artful. While human nature entails facing hardship, human beings indeed seem capable by nature of addressing them through the development and use of arts. Nature's benevolence for man, unique among animals, is the ability to use art rather than the guidance of pleasure, pain, and instinct for the satisfaction of his needs.[35]

Other passages from the Aristotelian corpus also help to make sense of the claim that plants exist for the sake of animals and animals exist for the sake of human beings. In *On Soul*, Aristotle argues that recognition of a knowable or perceptible thing as a sort of thing requires that the intellect be "in a certain way the intelligible things in potentiality, but in actuality it is none of them until it should think them" (429b30-31).[36] He then proceeds, "Now, bringing together the things said about the soul, let us say again that the soul is in a certain way all beings; for the beings

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[34] Thomas L. Pangle, "A Synoptic Introduction to the Ontological Background of Aristotle's Political Theory," *Interpretation* 46, no. 2 (Spring 2020): 279n40. The translation here is his. Pangle's note also has a helpful catalogue of 59 passages in the Aristotelian corpus related to the purposefulness of nature in living beings.

See also Pangle, "A Synoptic Introduction to the Ontological Background of Aristotle's Political Theory," 272n26. Discussing Allan Gotthelf, "Aristotle's Conception of Final Causality," *Review of Metaphysics* 30, no. 2 (Dec. 1976): 229, Pangle says, "[beginning with a quote of Gotthelf] 'In almost every passage in which Aristotle introduces, discusses, or argues for the existence of final causality, his attention is focused on the generation and development of a living organism' ([Pangle's addition] '*the* nature,' not nature as a whole)."

[35] Ambler, "Aristotle on Acquisition," 494.

[36] All translations of *On Soul* are my own, based on the text W.D. Ross, *De Anima* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956).

are either perceptibles or intelligibles, and knowledge is in a certain way the knowables, and perception is in a certain way the perceptibles" (431b20-23). Things cannot be perceived or known as what they are unless they have the potential to be perceived or known as what they are. This potential must lie in the perceiver or knower; the perceiver or knower is that with the capacity to perceive know. But this means that reality as it appears (that is, reality simply) is inseparable from the activity of the human mind and its concerns. Human need would be inseparable from beings as perceived or known in reality, which is itself anthropocentric.[37]

Anthropomorphic claims elicit some skepticism from us moderns, but Aristotle's *On Soul* helps us understand how a certain anthropomorphism may be true. The exalted reading of *Politics I.8* presents an anthropomorphism in which nature has ordained a sort of cosmic food chain with man at the peak. Our modern temptation is to understand this as saying that—even or especially as beings independent of the perspective of human beings—animals exist for our needs. We expect reality to be independent from our concerns and detached from their potential utility for us. Aristotle's response to us, however, would be that not only is the world of our concern all we have, but it is what most matters for us anyway. Granting this, would not reality then be infused with a variety of differing natures, each of which contain in part the capacity to address *our* needs? A deep understanding of cows, for example, would include a recognition of their potential to become hamburgers. Reality, being inseparable from the categories of thought of the human mind, in a

[37] I would not have been able to reach this conclusion without Pangle, "A Synoptic Introduction to the Ontological Background of Aristotle's Political Theory," 265. He argues, "Aristotle's zoological writings teach that the human soul with mind not only thus contributes fundamentally to the constituting of reality, but that the human being, on account of the distinctive activity of intellect and prudence, is the peak among the beings (*ousiai*) of reality thus constituted. So reality is profoundly anthropocentric. The entities of or in reality are *pragmata* of human needful *praxis* (including theoretical *praxis* or *pragmateuo*…), entailing human orientation, evaluation, and ranking…Aristotle endorses a sober interpretation of the famous Protagorean pronouncement, "the human is the measure of all"… If we may venture to apply somewhat helpful Nietzschean expressions, the 'real' world is 'the world of our concern to us'; reality is inevitably what is experienced from the human perspective."

way must present the plants and animals as existing for the sake of our needs. This is the serious, but far from obvious, core of Aristotle's anthropocentrism in I.8.

To recap what we have learned thus far, Aristotle's teleological doctrine in I.8 has at least two possible readings. First, there is an exalted reading in which nature has shown benevolence for all animals and especially human beings. By this reading, primitive life is comfortable existence and human art is not necessary. A second, skeptical reading presents itself once one recognizes the flaws of the exalted reading. The exalted reading points to difficulties, the working out of which ultimately results in more sensible suggestions. These sensible suggestions, however, do not contradict the text of the passage in themselves. They were always viable interpretive possibilities, though we likely would not have thought of them without the urgings of the exalting reading's difficulties.

The skeptical reading of I.8 yields a lesson about the relationship between nature and art and the character of anthropocentrism. We reached this by beginning first with the exalted reading, which suggested that basic arts of acquisition were given to us by nature. This suggestion is absurd because nobody is born with knowledge of these arts; if they were not taught for a few generations, the arts could be completely forgotten. But even being skeptical, we must admit that the capacity to develop arts does seem to be natural for human beings. This means that natural things, as they appear to human beings, are also potentially useful (or useless)—including plants and animals. The skeptical reading of I.8 shows that human nature provides the capacity for art as a remedy for man's neediness, and as a result shapes our perception of things to include their potential for use. Plants and animals are for the sake of human beings.[38]

38 Ambler, "Aristotle on Acquisition," 494.

IV. POLITICAL NEXUS OF THE TELEOLOGICAL DOCTRINE

Admittedly, Aristotle does not offer an explicit justification for natural purposefulness, but rather a corollary of it. He says, "Hence warfare is in a way skilled possession [*κτητική*] by nature, for hunting is part of it, which is necessary to use with a view both to beasts and to however many human beings by nature should be ruled but are unwilling, as this sort of war is by nature just" (1256b23-26). At first, this appears to be a completely separate point rather than a corollary, but closer consideration shows the connection. Aristotle's teleological doctrine posits that (1) certain beings are for the sake of others, (2) human beings are the highest beings in this hierarchy, and (3) nature's benevolence for human beings are the various artful ways of life. Consistent with this third element, if men need a certain form of rule, then nature must have provided the art by which they enter into it. The beginnings of politics or the household would then be analogous to the relationship between a hunter and his prey—the necessary consequences of a naturally ordained hierarchy. That is, if the acquisition of rule is natural, then we must add to his teleological thesis that even some human beings exist for the sake of others.[39]

Surprisingly, only at this step does Aristotle suggest that lower beings in nature's hierarchy might act in defiance of the natural order. For warfare is only part of skilled possession because it provides for the subjugation of "however many human beings by nature should be ruled but are unwilling." Why are they unwilling to be ruled? Did they not get the message that nature has already determined their fates? Also, in what way are some humans naturally suited to be ruled or to rule? One could understand this section of the teleology as saying that the natural rulers and subjects are simply those determined to be so by nature. But even by our exalted reading, nature

[39] Ambler, "Aristotle on Acquisition," 492. A full account of the implication of this paper would require a comparison with Aristotle's account of slavery, which is outside the scope of the present discussion. See Wayne H. Ambler, "Aristotle on Nature and Politics: The Case of Slavery," *Political Theory* 15, no. 3 (Aug. 1987).

exercises her beneficence for human beings through a natural understanding of various arts. The natural ruler would then be the economist or the statesman, while the natural subject would be the one without it.

At first, this section seems to justify all extant human rule, but closer consideration suggests the opposite. The naturalness of the art of war turns on the character of its product: a war justified by nature is one that results in the rule of economists or statesman over the ignorant. If all extant rule was established by truly wise statesmen, then those regimes would be legitimate by the standard of natural right ("as this sort of war is *by nature just*"). But one of the guiding questions of Aristotle's account of acquisition is the relationship of acquisitive expertise to economics and statesmanship. That is, we do not yet know whether ordinary political men possess arts of rule because we are currently considering the possible contents of those arts. Preliminarily, we may say that if sustenance rather than profit really is the standard for acquisition, the profit-maximizing approach to economics, necessary for gentlemanly politics, could be mistaken. If this is the case, then the exercise of war for the establishment of those politics would not be natural. Many, if not all, extant regimes would fall short of the standard of natural right.

Surprisingly, Aristotle next makes a bold criticism of Solon, Athens' ancestral lawgiver. The questions raised by this textual move offer a hint as to the political purpose of his teleology.

> Therefore, one form of skilled possession is according to nature part of economics, that which must either exist or which economics must provide in such a manner to provide that it exist, it being a storing of goods necessary with a view to life and of things useful for the association of the city or household. At any rate, this seems to be true wealth. For self-sufficiency by possession of these things with a view to a good life is not limitless, as Solon says, having written, "of wealth no limit lies having been revealed to men" (1256b26-34).[40]

[40] The syntax of this passage is incredibly difficulty. I have relied on Ambler, "Aristotle on Acquisition," 494, and Newman, *The Politics of Aristotle*, Vol. II, 178-80 as guides.

Solon, according to Aristotle, asserted that there is no clear limitation to human acquisition, while in fact there is a natural standard: the necessary and useful. But Aristotle's treatment of Solon turns out to be disingenuous. Pangle directs us to the context of the quoted passage of Solon: "In the context (preserved in Stobaeus 9.25), Solon is teaching that our otherwise insatiable quest for wealth ought to be limited to just pursuits by our fear of retributive sanctions visited upon mortals by Zeus. Solon makes no reference to nature or the natural moral order."[41]

Though Aristotle has set himself up in opposition to Solon, we observe that he, like Solon, intends to restrain human acquisition. Both Solon's cultivation of pious fear and Aristotle's cosmology provide support for only moderate acquisition. Yet we observe also that Aristotle seems to be attempting to replace Solon's basis for this moderation with his own. While we are not in a position to understand his reasoning for this at the moment, we can make a preliminary observation. On the one hand, the restraint of Solon's Athens requires a belief in retributive punishment—that justice actually has force in the world. Aristotle, on the other, offers a natural standard even though acquisition beyond this standard is ubiquitous, as he himself will show in I.9.

Aristotle leaves us thinking that the only natural acquisition is that done in accordance with need and utility, which in turn are to be narrowly construed as sustenance or things conducive to it.[42] Yet one must wonder what is wrong with Solon's approach, viz. allowing for acquisition beyond utility while moderating potential excesses through a cultivated reverence for divine law?

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41 Pangle, *Aristotle's Teaching in the Politics*, 282n59. See also Lowry, *The Archaeology of Economic Ideas*, 233 and 322n66.

42 Aristotle offers a hint that this may not be his final word on the matter, however, by saying that natural acquisition provides things "useful for the association of the city or household." "Useful for association of the city" could extend far beyond sustenance.

Does Aristotle really expect to bring all political action into accordance with this very narrow, potentially even harmful standard?

V. UNNATURAL MONEYMAKING

Aristotle begins I.9 by explaining the difference between natural and unnatural moneymaking. He says, "but there is another type of moneymaking…on account of which it is believed that no limit exists for wealth and property" (1256b40-57a1). This moneymaking and its counterpart, Aristotle suggests, are both arts. Nonetheless, while they appear to be the same on account of "resemblance" and are indeed not far different from one another, the limitlessness of unnatural moneymaking necessitates a distinction between the two. But curiously, Aristotle decides on the basis of this distinction not that these are two separate arts, as he said just a couple dozen words prior, but rather that natural moneymaking is not an art at all. On account of their difference with respect to limitlessness, he says, "the one is by nature, while the other is not by nature, but comes into being more and more through some experience and art" (1257a3-5).

Both the last sentence of I.8 and the very beginning of I.9 assert that natural moneymaking is an art, but the latter is soon contradicted with a reversion to collapsing the distinction between nature and certain forms of human art. Now Aristotle suggests that certain forms of art are not actually art at all while those that remain arose out of malicious human inventiveness. Throughout most of I.9, Aristotle will use this distinction as the basis for a history of mankind's descent into economic degeneracy. Beginning with natural acquisition, he unfolds for us an account of man's deepening economic perversity that reaches its trough at commercial activity.

Aristotle begins his account with a simple axiom: "each possession has a double use." The first use is "proper to the thing," i.e. using the possession for the purpose according to which it was designed. The second, "not proper to the thing," is trading the possession for something else. Barter arises from the latter usage. Aristotle says, "it was brought into being at first from something according to nature, that human beings have more or less than sufficiency" (1257a15-17).

Aristotle's second stage in man's economic history is the development of money to facilitate trade of possessions difficult to transport. Convention at this point supplements nature's limitations via compact. Aristotle's account here is revealing about his use of nature as a standard. The use of money in itself is not problematic, he suggests, because it came into being from "necessary exchange." Money comes into being on account of a natural need but does not for this reason become natural. If it did, the distinction between nature and convention would be meaningless. Nor would it be sensible to say that, on the basis of their conventionality, all conventions should be avoided. Conventions can be good when they remedy a natural need. Thus Aristotle encourages us to wonder in what way nature serves as his standard for politics. While Aristotle earlier suggested that the standard for political action was sustenance and utility narrowly construed, he now appears to be expanding this to allow for the satisfaction of natural needs and the conventions that assist in this satisfaction.

Commerce arises shortly after the creation of money. At first, money was used for necessary exchange, but it also makes possible an art of "trading from whatever and in whatever way it will make the greatest profit" (1257b4-5). This step makes intuitive sense, for all extant political communities seem to have people trying to maximize their share of money. But it also adds to our understanding of Aristotle's use of nature as a standard. Convention may be good, as we learn from Aristotle's treatment of the invention of money, but it becomes bad when it has deleterious effects. Natural need both legitimizes and delegitimizes conventions on the basis of their contribution to the economy of human needs.

Having laid out the historical origins of unnatural acquisition, Aristotle transitions to an extended treatment of the problems posed by it. First, he argues that people only believe money to be valuable under certain circumstances. For at times, people think of wealth only in terms of

money, yet when economic collapses occur, money seems "to be something nonsensical and to exist altogether by convention." Money tricks us into thinking we have stores of genuinely valuable possessions when we really do not. Through money, it becomes possible for people to believe that they have all they need even if they are actually "in want of necessary sustenance."

Aristotle's next step is convoluted. Explicitly, he argues that the cause of profit-seeking relates to the character of art itself. He says, "And this wealth, that from [commercial] moneymaking, is indeed without limit. For just as there is no limit for the doctor with respect to being healthy, each of the arts is also limitless with respect to its end…thus there is no limit for this sort of moneymaking, and the end is wealth of this sort and possession of money" (1257b23-30). Aristotle's argument about the arts sounds reasonable enough until one substitutes for medicine any of the other arts. Wealth and health are goods that people tend to pursue without limit, but they are unique in this regard. Carpenters and tailors, for example, do not pursue the ends of their art limitlessly because people do not pursue housing or suiting endlessly.[43] In the case of most arts, clients' needs limit demand, which limits the usage of the art. The art of moneymaking and medicine are apparently different in that they are not limited by their beneficiaries' awareness of the degree to which they need the product. Just as people irrationally seek medicine beyond what medicine can accomplish, so too do they seek wealth beyond what it can accomplish.

The cause of this, Aristotle argues, is fear of death coupled with thoughtlessness about living—a condition which apparently affects all of us as citizens in a capitalist regime.[44] He says, "The cause of this condition is that they are serious about living, but not about living well; and since

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[43] Pangle, *Aristotle's Teaching in the Politics*, 56.

[44] He says, "if we look at what happens we see that…*all* moneymakers increase their money without limit" (1257b33-34).

their desire is infinite, they also desire things productive of limitless things" (1257b40-58a2). That is, people have an insatiable desire not to die, and money seems to make possible the storage of massive amount of resources that can hold death off. Obviously this behavior is not clearsighted because it presupposes that death can be completely forestalled with enough resourcefulness—that death is not a necessary fate for all human beings. People who take the time to think about how to make the most of life—those who Aristotle calls "serious about living"—would not squander their time fighting for immortality. They would realize that, whatever a good life may be, it must be choiceworthy even or especially in light of the fact that all human beings will eventually die. By the standard of the man serious about living, limitless moneymaking is a pitiable waste of precious time.

Lest we believe the unseriousness Aristotle describes is confined only to the especially vulgar, he next shows us how it appears among the rest of us. We indeed aim at living well, but we understand living well in terms of bodily satisfaction. Money and the goods it makes available are inevitably unable to satisfy our lust for pleasure, but rather than directing our hedonistic efforts elsewhere, we try increasingly difficult and elaborate ways to make more money. We come to instrumentalize virtue as a means toward this gratification, unaware to ourselves that we are sacrificing pleasure in order to gain it. As Pangle argues, this fact reveals the fundamental truth of the hedonist's soul. He writes, "The explanation for why even sensual hedonists tend at bottom to be more concerned with acquiring money than with enjoying pleasures money can buy is that they are animated, at a level in their souls hidden even from themselves, not so much by the wish for

physical gratification as by the desperately infinite love of life, in the face of the awareness of mortal finitude."[45]

To recap, this section reveals that human beings are by nature quite vulnerable, and, by extension, fear of death is a ceaseless pathology of human nature. With this fear comes a passionate hope that somehow, in some way, death might not be inevitable after all. Human acquisitiveness in general is a response to neediness, but also tends to be expanded by this fundamental passion. We become hopeful that money can provide a sort of defense against our own mortality. This pitiable distraction tends to become all-consuming, pulling most people away from considering how they might live well in light of—rather than in denial of—the inevitability of death. Human acquisitiveness is both a natural response to genuine human need and an ensnaring distraction from addressing the full range of those needs.[46]

Next, Aristotle curiously remarks that unnatural moneymaking may be necessary after all. He says, "Therefore concerning unnecessary moneymaking, both what it is and on account of what cause we are in need of it, has been said" (1258b14-16). Let us recall the basic structure of Aristotle's economic history in order to make sense of this statement. Before the invention of money, man engaged in barter on account of natural scarcity. Barter met needs, but not completely enough. Money, however unnatural, did fulfill a natural need. Artful convention at this stage supplemented nature as a response to necessity. The adoption of money, however, also made the

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45 Pangle, *Aristotle's Teaching in the Politics*, 58. This does not mean that any interest in unneeded products is rooted in fear of death. Aristotle here describes the psychology behind a very consequential subset of unnecessary acquisition, not all unnecessary acquisition.

46 Lowry, *The Archaeology of Economic Ideas*, 247 is therefore quite wrong. He argues, "Although the ancient Greeks lived far closer to the edge of subsistence and survival than modern Western man, scarcity as a factor in their economic life did not become central to their orientation." Aristotle actually suggests here that at least a vague awareness of scarcity drives man's fundamental passions and takes over nearly all human acquisitiveness.

descent into profiteering inevitable. Because it is an unavoidable consequence of adopting money, profiteering too is unfortunately necessary.

Conventions are necessary, but often psychologically damaging. Yet a convention's potential for psychological damage evidently is not sufficient reason for avoiding its use altogether. Acquisitional expertise is consistent with the use of money because money is useful, though it is inconsistent with the unnecessary and useless acquisitional excesses thereby made possible.

Solon now appears to be vindicated, at least to some degree. First, Aristotle seems to have tacitly expanded the range of the meaning of need and utility beginning with the introduction of money. Second, by expanding this range, he grants the reasonableness of adopting conventions that one knows will not have entirely positive effects. One such convention is money, which both fulfills a need and makes possible the expansion of human acquisitiveness beyond need and utility. Because it deals with the psychological distress at the heart of this expansion, the Solonic cultivation of religious fear is then hardly an alternative at all, but instead a necessary complement for the vast majority of people who will never read or understand Aristotle's teaching. Aristotle seems to intend for his teaching in *Politics* I.8-11 to exist alongside rather than to replace traditional religion, perhaps for a core gentlemanly audience.

VI. REASSERTION OF THE TELEOLOGICAL DOCTRINE

Aristotle begins I.10 by adding to the curious conclusion of I.9. Not only do we now know why unnecessary acquisition is necessary, but "the question raised from the beginning is also now clear [I.8.1256a], viz. whether moneymaking belongs to the skilled economist and statesman or not, but must rather supply money [to them]" (1258a19-21). Importantly, the answers to both questions are apparently contained within I.8-9; I.10 serves as a supplement.

The argument that follows is again surprisingly unsatisfying. Aristotle says,

> For just as statesmanship does not make human beings, but takes them from nature and uses them, thus also must nature hand over the earth or the sea or something else with a view to sustenance, and from these [forms of sustenance],[47] it befits the economist to dispose of things as they should be (1258a21-25).

First, is Aristotle's claim about statesmanship here entirely true? Let us assume political communities grew only through births. If the common good of the political community required a population increase, would one not expect especially the statesman to know what sorts of policies might encourage a higher birth rate? The statesman indeed does not supervise every step of the creation of new citizens, but his influence is definitely the most artful part of the process. Nonetheless, Aristotle already suggested in I.8 that political communities also grow through the art of war, which is "in a way skilled possession by nature." If the art of war is a mode of growing the political community and a natural form of acquisition, then the claim that the political art does not entail the art of acquisition cannot be true.

Second, Aristotle again makes the argument that nature "must" do something. In general, the teaching of the exalted reading of Aristotle's teleological doctrine is that nature is the standard by which to judge acquisition's moral legitimacy. Statements such as the one above, however, suggest

[47] Newman, *The Politics of Aristotle*, Vol. II, 194.

instead that the moral content of Aristotle's nature has its basis in the moral expectations of human beings. But what if we set those expectations aside and assume that nature might not meet our expectations? Would it not then befit especially the economist to know not only how to use property, but also how to get it? Aristotle seems to be deliberately instilling a false sense of confidence in the availability of basic sustenance, which runs counter to the clarity about scarcity that a true skilled economist would need. Why would he do this?

Aristotle continues,

> For it does not belong to weaving to make wool, but to use it and to know what sort is useful and suitable or paltry and unsuitable. For otherwise someone might raise the question, "On account of what is moneymaking part of economics, but not a part of medicine? Indeed, those of the household also must be healthy, just as they must live or do any other of the necessary things." And just as seeing to health belongs to the economist and to the ruler, and also does not belong to them but to the doctor, thus also does money belong to the economist and also not, but to the subordinate art (1258a25-34).

Aristotle's next step relies on a distinction between architectonic and subordinate arts. Getting wool, he claims, is an independent art separate from but subordinate to weaving. By this explanation, the two arts are different even though acquisition is in a way necessary for the exercise of the art of weaving. For if acquisition were not separate from the architectonic arts, then any number of the many arts that provide for the needs of the household would all belong to economics. In a way, however, these subordinate arts are part of the architectonic arts, but not in their entirety. The expert economist is not also a doctor, but rather the one who knows when the use of the art of medicine is necessary and to what degree. Economics, as an architectonic art, structures the use of the other arts according to the degree they are needed.

Let us then consider the implications of this account of the arts for moneymaking and economics. We surmise that moneymaking is used by economics in accordance with human need. Like medicine, moneymaking can be understood both as a subordinate art or, when disconnected

from the standard of need, as an art which pursues its ends without any particular standard in mind. The last time Aristotle had us consider medicine as an example, however, we realized that the other arts do not really produce aimlessly. Demand for the tailor or carpenter's arts is limited by people's awareness of their need for suiting or housing. That is, art as such is artful to the degree that it satisfies needs, and so consequently the subordinate arts can only be properly artful when governed by arts that give their products structure in accordance with the hierarchy of human needs. In order for moneymaking or medicine to make sense as arts at all, they must be limited by the demands of some more architectonic art. While Aristotle in this account has suggested that moneymaking is more completely an art when separated from economics, in truth it is only comprehensible as an art when subordinated to it.

Aristotle, however, apparently rejects this conceptualization of the relationship between the arts. He does this, at least by the exalted reading of this passage, in order to preserve nature as the acquisitional artisan that provides for our needs. He argues, "Most of all, as was said before, nature must supply sustenance. For providing sustenance to a newborn is the work of nature. For the thing that remains [i.e., afterbirth][48] is sustenance for that which is born. Hence moneymaking is according to nature for all from the fruits and the animals" (1258b34-38). Just as nature provides afterbirth to newborn mammals, she provides the crops and animals for our sustenance. The difficulty, however, is that crops and animals are not as easily available as afterbirth. As every farmer knows, if one tries to live off of the yields of an uncultivated field, he will likely starve. The human capacity to develop art is the way in which nature (i.e., human nature) provides for our sustenance.

48 Newman, *The Politics of Aristotle*, Vol. II, 195.

On the whole, Aristotle's treatment of the relationship between nature and acquisition operates on two levels. On the surface, it presents moneymaking and the arts of rule as separate arts and argues that nature for the most part takes care of the former. Consequently, this has the moral effect of making unnatural acquisition appear like money grubbing. The surface level reading would not then leave its readers with true clarity about the art of acquisition because it obscures the demands of scarcity and our genuine need for some conventions. Nonetheless, it has the benefit of moderating the character of its reader's political and household activity. But this consequence comes from its moral effects, not genuine knowledge of moneymaking and economics. On the deeper level, Aristotle's treatment of this relationship shows that the true economist would be the one who subordinates moneymaking to the hierarchy of needs as revealed by the arts of rule. One cannot have any of these arts without having them all. Thus the juxtaposition of the surface level with the deeper one suggests two incredibly weighty conclusions: (1) the purpose of the surface level teaching is to bring those who rule towards an approximation in deed (but not understanding) of the clear-sighted acquisitional activities of a genuine possessor of the arts of rule, and (2) a genuine possessor of expertise in these arts would have an uncommon clarity about the things truly necessary and useful for human beings.

VII. APPLICATION

Aristotle begins I.11 by telling us that everything preceding this chapter related to knowledge, while what follows in the next chapter will explain utility. The practical application of I.8-10, he suggests, is not as obvious as we may think. Indeed, many commentators are baffled by what they consider to be a complete abandonment of his distinction between natural and unnatural acquisition which he had just reasserted in I.10.[49] But attention to the larger rhetorical project of Aristotle from I.8-11 shows instead that I.11 clarifies rather than abandons the crucial dimensions of the previous chapters.

Aristotle's first step in this chapter is to argue that a moneymaker needs experience in the useful parts of moneymaking. He then presents three basic categories for classification of the modes of moneymaking to be learned. First, there are the elements of "the most proper moneymaking," which include the various modes of acquiring sustenance—essentially the sorts Aristotle earlier called natural acquisition (1258b12-21). Second, there are the elements of the art of exchange: trade, moneylending, and wage labor. Third, "there is a third form of moneymaking between this and the first, for it has a part according to nature and a part of exchange, having to do with however many things that come from the earth and the fruitless but useful things that come from the earth, such as timber cutting and mining" (1258b27-31).

Expert moneymaking by this account requires not simply experience in "the most proper moneymaking," but also in the very modes of acquisition that Aristotle has repeatedly told us are unnatural and unnecessary. He now explicitly grants that the natural standard for moneymaking presented by the exalted reading of I.8-10 excludes some useful arts. But if these arts are truly

[49] Pangle, *Aristotle's Teaching in the Politics*, 283n63. Pangle helpfully catalogues the confusions of commentators about this passage.

useful—that is, if they address real human needs—the relationship between art and nature according to the exalted reading of Aristotle's earlier presentation becomes far more problematic. For if an art can be useful though unnatural, then nature is at best only an inconsistent or qualified standard for human action. This passage is the clearest example in Aristotle's account of moneymaking that the unnecessary and unnatural things are, strictly speaking, still choice-worthy to the extent that they are useful for the satisfaction of natural needs. As Wayne Ambler argues, "we are forced to conclude that, for Aristotle, the end does not always 'naturalize' the means," but also that those means do not lose their utility on account of their unnaturalness.[50]

Aristotle's next step offers a clue as to what his project is,

> And now each of these things have been spoken about generally, and an exact account is useful for laboring, but to linger on them is vulgar. The most artful of these works is whichever has the least chance; and the most vulgar are those which maim bodies the most; and the most slavish are those in which the body is most used; and the most un-wellborn is that which least needs virtue (1258b33-39).

On the one hand, Aristotle seems to want to preserve the possibility of using the full range of moneymaking, and by extension, he grants the utility of the full range. On the other hand, he also wants to preserve or even heighten our sense that certain types of moneymaking are ignoble. His account aims to cultivate a sense of shame for resorting to certain means, even though this will make some who genuinely need to use those means unwilling to use them. A general reluctance to use them, which occasionally bows to the demands of special circumstances, seems to be the intended result. Aristotle seems to do this, as we considered earlier, in order to bring the moneymaking of a portion of his audience closer to the more moderate acquisition of truly skilled economists.

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50 Ambler, "Aristotle on Acquisition," 501.

Aristotle's account of Thales' moneymaking scheme, considered in its relation to his previous arguments, further clarifies his procedure. According to his tale, others were taking Thales' poverty as evidence of the uselessness of philosophy, and reproaching him. But Thales, having observed through astronomy that a plentiful harvest of olives was approaching, raised enough money to monopolize all the olive presses in Miletus and Chios. When suddenly demand for the olive presses rose, Thales had complete control of the market and could hire out the presses on whatever terms he wished. Through this, Aristotle says, Thales showed, "that it is easy for philosophers to become wealthy, should they wish it, but it is not this that they pursue seriously" (1259a17-18).

Thales' understanding of the value of money differs from those who chastise him. For Thales, relatively little wealth is actually necessary, and so moneymaking is not worthy of much seriousness. Philosophy is useful even for the acquisition of wealth, as he himself demonstrated, yet the rebukes of his deriders suggest that his interest was not at all in its wealth producing capacity. Even though Thales could be far wealthier if he wished, he seems to prefer a life of contemplation for its own sake. The seriousness of philosophy stands independent of its usefulness.

The situation of Thales' deriders recalls Aristotle's account of the psychology of limitless moneymaking. We saw there that human beings suffer from two related psychological conditions: (1) we fear death desperately, and (2) we hope to somehow overcome its apparent inevitability. This hope tends to energize our concern for property, making us believe on a subconscious level that somehow our stuff can fortify us from death. Someone in the grip of this hopefulness, however, would believe money to be among the most serious things, but Thales seems to have largely overcome this pathology. The story of Thales thus suggests that philosophy, as the study of natural necessities and thereby the natural necessity of death, actually relieves the harmful

consequences of our psychological condition to a great degree. Moreover, this relief brings greater clarity about our actual natural needs and their worthiness of our acquisitional efforts in light of what is possible. Philosophy for human beings is both a much-needed medicine for the soul and an essential component of expert moneymaking and economics. The true economist is the philosopher.

Aristotle closes his account of acquisition by elucidating the divide between philosophers and political life. "It is useful," he says, "for statesmen also to know these things. For many cities need moneymaking and revenues of this sort, just like households, but even more" (1259a33-35). The very sorts of moneymaking toward which Aristotle was earlier generating reluctance is apparently quite necessary for the demands of civic life. But if civic life needs so much energy directed toward moneymaking, surely it must be very difficult to avoid the psychological consequences that tend to accompany a commercial orientation. The city likely even depends on the lack of clarity that makes seriousness about moneymaking possible. Therefore the city appears to be in need of a means to obscure the fear-inspiring reality of human mortality and to offer a moral teaching that prevents the misdirection of moneymaking efforts (especially toward injustice, as Solon understood). Civic life's dependence on large-scale moneymaking thus raises barriers to its capacity for clear-sightedness. The philosopher as an individual is uniquely capable of moneymaking expertise in a way that would absolutely collapse ordinary civic life.

Aristotle has finally put us in a position to speculate why his teleological doctrine might have advantages over the fear of divine punishment cultivated by Solon. We have already considered that Aristotle's doctrine is likely meant to exist alongside Solon's rather than to completely replace it. It seems to speak to an audience of gentlemen who take pride in their self-sufficiency and their distance from necessity, rather than to an ordinary Athenian. Generally speaking, the Solonic fear

of divine retribution would likely coincide with a belief that those who have sacrificed real human needs are worthy of divine reward on account of their justice. That is, it would reorient the desperate hopefulness that drives unlimited moneymaking towards otherworldliness. It would also make no suggestion of the existence of natural limitation. Aristotle's teleological doctrine, in contrast, may distort the extent of our natural penury, but does not claim that anything supernatural would ever intervene. His doctrine thus speaks to the gentleman's concern for self-sufficiency while pushing it to be deeper and more thoughtful about necessity. Further, the thoughtfulness about necessity it inspires might even become intellectual seeds that germinate into philosophic clarity. Lastly and more politically, because Aristotle's nature is non-punitive, it may also pose a smaller obstacle to use of commercial and industrial moneymaking as a means to satisfying the city's needs than would fear of a punitive deity.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Aristotle is not ignorant of the harsh reality of natural scarcity. He understands the human condition as one of deep neediness and believes that human ingenuity should be used in response. Conventionality is, in light of this unfortunate condition, not to be completely rejected. Yet clarity about neediness requires that we not lose sight of convention's purpose as a response to need. Natural wealth thus takes priority for Aristotle over conventional wealth, for natural wealth alone directly addresses our needy condition. But money, both on the level of the individual and on the level of politics, is not therefore unimportant. Natural limitations restrict our access to natural wealth, and for this reason the accumulation of cash makes perfect sense.

Money is not, however, an unqualified good, despite its capacity to address our most basic needs. Aristotle recognizes that human beings want more than food, water, and shelter. We worry not just about staying alive in the moment but also about staying alive forever. Money not only remedies our scarcity, but also energizes our subconscious hopes that property can fortify us against our mortality. This natural pathology must be curbed in order to focus on the spiritual needs that make life rich. Money both helps to satisfy our needs and pulls us away from satisfying their full range.

Thus, while Aristotle accepts the necessity of markets and respects the need for a market value that differs from use value, he would not embrace free markets. On the most basic level, Aristotle seems to think that religion should curb acquisitional excess in a way conducive to both the justice of community and the psychological health of the individual. Yet Aristotle, in a way, anticipates a qualified version of the modern capitalist's objection that the individual pursuit of wealth would be beneficial for the community at-large. He would object that the unfettered pursuit of wealth would be psychologically harmful, but he nonetheless grants that the community needs the

capacity to pursue wealth to the degree that wealth is necessary. His teleological doctrine serves this purpose by creating a sense of shame among his gentlemanly audience that curbs the psychological damage of acquisition without preventing them from acquiring truly necessary wealth. Markets, in sum, are necessary, but we should not indulge in them so much that we lose sight of need and utility.

Aristotle also argues that a true understanding of economics requires a more penetrating analysis of human psychology than ordinary political discourse and modern economics suggest. The core of Aristotelian economics is use value, but clarity about use value, it holds, is all too often distorted by natural psychological pathologies. The cure for these pathologies is philosophic clarity. As Aristotle's tale of Thales shows, one can come to understand his truest needs if one becomes clearsighted about natural necessity—especially with regards to the mortality of human beings. But Aristotle also seems to think that ordinary political life depends on some lack of clarity about our true needs. The economic clarity of ordinary political life will then always be at some distance from that of the philosopher. The philosopher is the true skilled moneymaker and economist, and for this reason will always be in tension with ordinary politics.

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